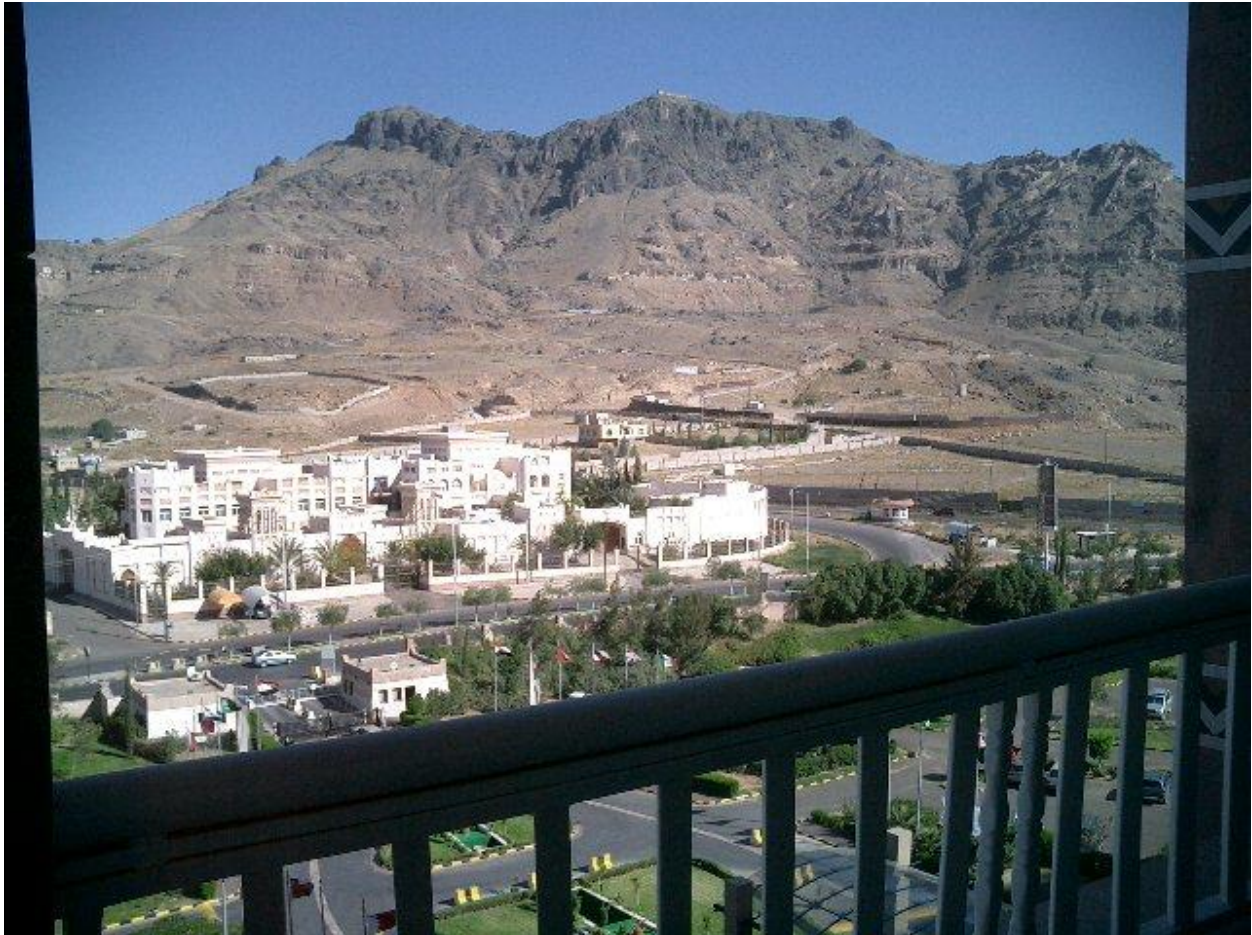


I-am-in Ya-man, man!
Week One (of Four) in Less Than Four Pages
Wednesday, 3 November 2010



Balcony view from my overpriced suite at the Swiss-owned Mövenpick Hotel Sana'a

Marhaba, welcome to my short blah-blah-blah from Yemen.

I hope you voted early and often, and reduced my taxes and role of the new socialist, business-unfriendly federal government. Yes, we can and should.

Now that I may have your attention, say, what do Afghanistan, Alabama, Behar, Kosovo, Nepal, and Yemen have in common? Duh, they are the poorest in their region.

I get such assignments from recommendations from consultants, clients, friends and not-so-friends, or from dumb luck. This one, I am saddened to think of: 1) of my 100+ international assignments in 30+ countries, two of my caring and effective clients were killed on-the-job, one dear man, Larry, in Amman in 2002 and one lovely young Scottish lady, Linda, in Kunduz a few weeks ago; and 2) the unchecked growth and effectiveness of an Al Qaeda franchise in Yemen per the recent cell-phone activated explosive devices found through Saudi Arabian intelligence in FedEx and UPS cargo planes

in the Dubai and the UK. My Uncle Morty of blessed memory couldn't put FedEx and UPS in the same thought without saying, "When FedEx and UPS were thinking of merging, they thought to call the new firm FedUp." There is no justice on earth. Ugh.

Yemen is very beautiful, varied with two long coasts, mountains, inland and coastal deserts with enormous agricultural potential, with charming, modest, helpful and youthful people. Five beautiful young Yemeni gals took me to lunch today, they in public black burkahs, and me in my nylon lime-colored, long-sleeve fishing shirt. They said, "No problem, we will protect you, our American friend; we know you are a Jew. No problem."

Indeed, it was no problem as we navigated Sana'a's Sunday-1 p.m. traffic in two private cars and returned to our office in two commercial cabs. The gals ordered the food and the cabs; they would not allow me to pay for them. We could have squeezed into one cab but that would compromise modesty...

We ate freshly grilled fresh fish from the Red Sea, pickled vegetables, lemons and chili, tare-wheat flat bread, chicken and vegetable soup, and sweet tea. I asked if they thought perhaps Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammad might have eaten such a meal. They agreed, but corrected me with, "Surely you mean Ibrahim, right?"

I couldn't resist re-telling a story I heard from Jack of Nicosia. A high school teacher goes to market to buy fish. He sees a sign which reads, "We Sell Fresh Fish." He orders his fish, and tells the storekeeper, "You know, everyone knows you sell fish. You should change your sign to read only 'Fresh Fish.'" A week later, the teacher returns to the shop to buy fish. He sees the new sign and suggests, "Really, everyone knows your fish is fresh. You should change your sign to simply 'Fish.'" A week later, he returns to the shop to buy fish. He sees the new sign and comments, "Actually, you don't need a sign at all. Everyone can smell the fish 500 meters from your shop!"

I moved from the *South Beach Diet* to the *North Sana'a Diet*! It is 29 hours of continuous travel from Tucson to Chicago to Istanbul to Sana'a on this trip, no sleepover, no serious rest. Ugh.

Two of the gals are medical doctors. The other three are communications, entrepreneurial, and program monitoring and evaluation specialists, fluent in English which they learned from special classes, American movies, and DVDs. None of their parents speak English. Their ages range from early 20s to mid-30s. All had college degrees, some advanced degrees. The married ones were married before they were 20 years old and each already has several children. The oldest is single and unlikely to marry as in this culture, she is too old marry unless she brings property or wealth to the marriage.

I told this story. A man walks into a bar and orders a drink. A woman sits next to him at a bar stool and says, "Say, I haven't seen you here before." He says, "Why yes, I am new in town." "Oh," she says, "where are you from?" He says, "I was in prison for the past five years." She says, "Oh, what did you do?" He says, "I killed my wife." She hesitates and asks, "So then, you're single?"

We laughed and exchanged jokes. One woman said, "The Virgin Mary asked St. Peter if she could leave Heaven one afternoon for a party. St. Peter agreed but insisted she be back at the Gates by midnight. The Virgin appeared at the Gate at 4 p.m. She banged at the Gate to wake up the Saint. Peter asked, 'Who is out there?' She replied, 'It's me, the Virgin.' St. Peter answered, 'I don't think so!'"

I am working with a team to draft the agricultural strategy for a client's program. The team leader is an American senior program manager, a woman with years' experience with a large non-profit

humanitarian charity, plus support from an American international agricultural consultant with local experience, two local guys who are local agricultural coordinators, a local gal who studied journalism in Miss-iss-ippi, and me. We have less than \$10 M to spend in five years.

Our program overarching goal is stabilization through agriculture. Its two objectives are improved agricultural practices and enhanced agricultural value-chain/ markets. We are working up short-, mid-, and long- term strategies. We are emphasizing youth, agricultural vocational training, demonstration farms, farmer-to-farmer workshops, and improvements in livestock, horticulture, and fishing while promoting good governance and community participation. We have to make an informal internal presentation in two days to a vetting or murder-board, and a formal presentation in a week to our donor and the ministry of agriculture and irrigation.

Challenging. Society here is fragmented: suspicious tribes with long history of failed farm cooperatives, community business organizations, government interventions. Extensive corruption. The Office of the Inspector General says, rampant “fraud, waste and abuse;” that is extensive corruption in a failed state. Not to mention kidnappings, ransom demands, crime, and general lack of national security, law and order, and, sorry Obama, Islamic terrorism. Ugh. Bloody good thing I get paid either way, not for performance, results, or the dreaded-one-to-measure, *impacts*. I suppose some people like the warm fluids splashing back when pissing up a rope...

Of course, Morty would also say, “When Stop-and-Go thought to merge with A&P, they thought the new firm might be called “Stop-and-P.” Indeed, no justice on earth. Ugh.



Dusk at Sana'a Al-Saleh Mosque

I-am-in Ya-man, man!
Week Two (of Four) in Less Than Six Pages
Wednesday, 10 November 2010



Coca-Cola (not Coma Caca!) is the real thing is everywhere, in Sana'a

Marhaba, welcome to my short blah-blah-blah from Yemen. Curious place which bans alcohol, pork, churches, Skype and pornography but not Moslem terrorist web sites.

So, these animals wanted to get drunk and decided to send a turtle to buy some booze. After a while, they realize it is getting late, but the turtle hasn't returned yet with the alcohol. One says, "What are we going to do now? That no good turtle took our money and hasn't come back with anything to drink!" From the back of the hall, a small voice says, "If you keep insulting me, I won't even leave yet to the liquor store."

Tribal society does not interact well with other tribes, especially where they compete for resources. You know, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." My Serbian-Croatian program manager says in her country, they have a saying, "Happiness is when my neighbor's cow dies." Ugh.



Impromptu birthday party, gender disaggregated in USG-speak

I had one of the best dining experiences in 67 years at the Mövenpick Dar Fez Moroccan Restaurant. Napoleon and the Queen Victoria likely never had a better one. The restaurant has a talented female Moroccan.... chef. Sorry, no Oriental Dancer or masseuse. But a marvelous chef. The menu in French, Arabic and English as she spoke, features great new items to me, like Lamb Head, Lamb Kidney, Lamb Liver, Lamb Balls, not to mention familiar regional items like Piss Soup and Turkish Coffee, with exquisite servers – makes you think they want to marry you.

Unfortunately, you can only buy wine by the bottle, not the glass, hick-up, hick-up. Consequently, some of the paragraphs following may be incoherent and slurred. Sorry.

I ordered a lemon-mint sweetened juice with four marinated vegetable salads which were tangy and breathlessly delicious, like the young Sophie Loren or your first time in your girlfriend's Chevy backseat. Ahem. The citrus-marinated vegetables were cauliflower, eggplant, zucchini, and another squaw, I mean squash. Hick-hick, up.

Dinner came with bottled water, assorted breads, I mean breads, marinated and spicy olives, and small clay pots, I mean pots of spicy pastes, with several servers chatting with me in French, Arabic and English, with mesmerizing background Arabic male vocalist accompanied by gentle drums, tambourines, strings and occasional female thrills, I mean shrills.

The main dish was a you-can-live-for couscous dish in a capped clay pot with accompanying sauce. The dish had a charming baked chicken with large chunks of steamed potatoes, carrots, and zucchini on a bed of just-right couscous. The accompanying sauce was a warm, thick lemon-orange lentil broth. Ugh, I was delighted.

Even when I made my way to elevator with its outward glass overhand and polished ceiling mirror, with several men in pajamas or whatever they wear. Sorry about the farts, guys.

In my suite, I threw my clothes in the bathroom sink to wash, and thought to write this up while they soak in sudsy water. I hope to take some pics to attach.

I had a remarkable day, designing agricultural, health, water, and environmental programs for \$75M of grants. Wonderful meetings with some of the brightest people I've met – US and Yemeni women. Most of the professional staff in my office are women, I am swimming in an estrogen sea and it's okay. So far.

One of the Yeminiis noticed I had a bloody eye, which I didn't know. She took me to two other Yemini women in the office who are medical doctors. One called a local hospital and took me there where a Yemeni doctor interviewed me and another took my blood pressure, which was perfect, I mean perfect. Reminds of the joke of the MD who takes your blood pressure, and says, "The numbers are fine, except your age!"

We figure the bloody eye is a reaction to some environmental irritant, like the desk or floor cleaning fluids our officer janitress uses. My partner-in-agricultural planning has been reactive to apparent dust or solvents for several days. Maybe me too. This morning, I asked our janitress not to clean our office desks. I know I have had swollen but not bloody eyes in exposure to dumps in Batam and paper-waste ponds in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. Time will tell. The interviewing MD told me to soak my eyes in cold water or eyelids in ice. I chose water, and played swish-swish, look-for-the-fish in the bathroom sink before sudsin' it up for my nightly laundry wash. Ugh.

As I am washing my nylon shirts et al, I realize that Montezuma has caught up with me. If loose lips sink ships, what do loose bowels sink? Commodes? Loose bowels sink Commodes!



My Yemeni exercise coach...



Wash, rinse, dry in three Mövenpick bathroom tubs, left to right if you can't tell

My exercise coach tells me a Frenchman comes to Sana'a for business. He is paid 10,000 Yemeni Riyals monthly. He soon lives as if he has \$30,000 YERs. Ah, she says, he discovered Yemeni ways of getting money by adjusting to the widespread corruption.

My senior program manager is very tall woman of Eastern European stock. She says, "In my home country, people say if you are short, you are being punished by God."

Ghesh, I am becoming so culturally sensitive, I deferred to a group of Japanese ladies to use the elevator from my floor without my presence, like they were Moslem ladies.

This morning, my governance and civic society advisor tells me three people died: a prostitute, a very handsome man, and a gay guy. St. Peter tells them, "You have been very bad and will go to Hell. But before you are banished to Hell, you each may spend a weekend with anyone you chose." The prostitute says she's like to spend it with Joseph of Egypt, and away she goes. The handsome guy

says he'd like to spend it with the Virgin Mary, and away he goes. The gay guy doesn't say anything. Peter sends him to the den of the prophets, and still he does not say anything. Peter sends him to Gabriel, and he still doesn't say anything. Finally, the Saint sends the man to God himself. The man puts his hand on God's arm and smiles, saying, "I'd like to know you better."

Ugh, yesterday I attended all-day policy making meetings in water, agriculture, corruption, education, and decentralization and local governance. The water and agriculture were okay, I guess, but the presenters didn't think much of controlling water demand by pricing, implementing seawater desalination for drinking water or wastewater collection, treatment and reuse for crop irrigation. There was some interested in capturing grey water at mosques (which use a lot of water for feet washing prior to prayer), schools (which use lots of water from pranksters), and village centers. (I'll put together a project description for such. Plus, one for waste collection, and one for recoverable metals and other material commodities from villages by youth groups.)

They didn't think much of me saying that the country needs to eventually give up on fresh-water crop production as they are running out of inexpensive, easily available fresh water on its very limited arable land. Most irrigation wells are now 150 to 300 meters deep. Annually, hundreds of deep irrigation wells are illegally being drilled by 500 to 800 illegal drilling rigs. It's estimated there are thousands of illegal irrigation wells currently operating. The government is too fragment and contested by the tribes which control the rural areas to implement any policy of any sort. Ugh. I suggested the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation morph into a food import safety and security agency. Currently, about 40% of the population has access to safe drinking water. The country imports about 70% of its food and will import more as water becomes less available.

The agricultural presentation was silly as it assumed abundant fresh water is and will always be available, and agriculture here is and will be generally viable. That is nonsense. The country is rapidly running out of easy and cheap to get fresh water. The presenter insisted the government collects agricultural use fees for various activities but seemed unaware that the fees do not filter down to the implementing departments which are perennially underfunded and needy. Though many women work actively in agriculture, there are few professional women in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation or its departments. There didn't seem to be any interest in promoting or advocating women in these organizations. Culture can kill a good idea like gender equity and civil society.

The unfortunate corruption, education, and decentralization and local governance presentations were restatements of what donors requested in their grant conditions. Ugh. Gotta go, room service is here with my shrimp salad and smoked salmon tray.

**I-am-in Ya-man, man! *Eid Al-Adha Al-Mubarak!*
Week Three (of Four) in Five Poorly Drafted Pages
Wednesday, 17 November 2010**



Sana'a obelisk of the Prophet Mohammad honoring Yemen. If the prophet returned today, he would have to cut off the hands of most of the ministers and government agents.

Wrote activity plans for agriculture, solid-waste resource recovery, water projects. Drafted streamlined environmental compliance strategy for 2,100 grants at \$75 million to be spent within five years. Fell in love again with Sarah Palin and her outspokenness. Watched Republicans recapture the House and almost the Senate, the avowed socialist/ tax and spend President go to India to learn about capitalism and markets and Indonesia to declare that Indonesia is part of him, 1 ½+ million people circling and stoning Hajj rituals. Heard UK Prince William is to marry - so he's not gay!

Watching tons of Arabic TV programs about the glorious spread of Islam by the sword. What else?

Anyone have ways to recycle plastic bags other than for temporary bathing suits or diaper covers?

Got blowback from my claims that fresh-water irrigated agriculture here is doomed as the country runs out of easily obtainable fresh water. Long-term strategy is in education and eco-cultural tourism to create wealth to desalt seawater.

Watching my bank account shrink as LSW works up our new Tucson home. Ugh.

After months of delaying, I FINALLY completed a draft article on Middle East Water Crisis for the American Geological Institute's EARTH magazine. Wonder if they will accept it?

At breakfast, my Italian-Ethiopian, retired World Bank official living in Roma, Alfredo, tells me:

Ronald Wilson Reagan, Margaret Hilda Thatcher, François Maurice Adrien Marie Mitterrand, The Pope, and a Belgium student are on a private plane in Europe. The pilot announced, "So sorry, but the plane is going to crash. However, four of you can be saved because there are four parachutes. But there are five passengers." Reagan says, "As the leader of the Free World, the richest and most powerful country in the world, I surely deserve a chute." The American President takes one and jumps out. Thatcher says, "As America's best ally, creator of constitutional law and the English language, I certainly deserve a chute." The British Prime Minister takes one and jumps. Mitterrand says, "As the representative of the smartest and most sophisticated people in the world, it is obvious that I deserve a chute." The French Prime Minister takes one and jumps. The Pope turns to the Belgium student and says, "My son, I am accustomed to sacrifice. I humbly urge you to take the remaining chute to save yourself." The student tells the Pope, "But your Holiness, there are two parachutes remaining!" The Pope says, "No my son, Mitterrand took the last chute." The Belgium student says, "Not so, the Frenchy took my knapsack and jumped, leaving two chutes for us."

When Robert Mugabe first became president of Zimbabwe, he applied for a loan to build a highway to help modernize the new country. He visited the U.S. Congressman in charge of facilitating the loan. Visiting the Congressman at his northern Virginia estate, he asked, "How can you afford such an estate on your government salary?" The Congressman told Mugabe he had saved his money and lived frugally for years. Mugabe didn't believe him and finally, the Congressmen said, "Look out the window with me. You see the highway there. I got 50 percent." Years later, the Congressman visited Mugabe in Zimbabwe at the President's palace. He was impressed. It was very large and ornate, with halls lined with gold walls. The Congressman asked, "How can you afford such luxury in such a poor country?" The President says, "Look, the walls have ears here, but let's walk in my garden. You see the highway?" The Congressman looks, but does not see a highway. Mugabe says, "100 percent."

My security manager with an English name I can't recall told me he spent yesterday morning conducting a security audit at one of his sites. He had set up a roster for the local security staff so they could know in advance when each one was expected to be on duty. The staff told him they loved the roster as it reduced their time at work. This puzzled him, so he looked more carefully at the roster. Of course, it is challenging to read in the first instance as nearly everyone has the same or similar names. But more challenging was that several officers completed their day's work before showing up for work, as there was confusion over the 12-hour clock schedule, which should have been a 24-hour clock schedule. Go figure. I also have this problem: say, it is 0800 hours and I am to be at a meeting at 1000 hours – what am I supposed to do with my free 200 hours?



Yemen drug of choice - Qat crop at left; aluminum gat spittoons at right

At Friday super-buffet luncheon, I ask my seater, Hana, about her family. She says she has 5 brothers and ten sisters, from three mothers. I asked if it is appropriate for a brother of one mother to marry a sister of another mother but the same father. Hana says that's *haram* (*traef* to you, or not-kosher). She says her father's different wives and their children live apart but near each other, not in the same household, as it is "better that way."

Abdullnassar, my waiter, has 11 brothers and sisters, though he is Ethiopian and Yemeni. He tells me, "A man without a wife, is a kitchen without a knife." He is single and says he wants only one wife, unless she is barren then he would need another wife to produce children, unless she produces only girls, he would need another wife to produce boys. He says his father's several wives live together in the same household and get along like sisters. Hmm.

Hyette has only one brother. She is Moroccan from Casablanca, and has the other seater job as she came on holiday to visit her cousin, liked Sana'a, and found the job as she speaks fluent English and French, and adds serious curves to the dinning suite. Many of the Yemeni men come to dine there just for the eye candy, especially considering the Yemeni women are mostly loose-fitting black sheets with slits for eyes. Hyette dresses in tight-American style business suits, which emphasizes her robustness – she has curves in places where other girls don't even have places, as Groucho Marx would say.

Can you visualize the gossip and discussions over family life with several mothers and a score or so of brothers and children? I didn't ask about it, nor about how many children died young or mothers in child-birth, but imagine discussions like who makes the best *babaghanuj*, whose son did so bad at the *Madrassa*, whose daughter was caught smoking, and who is sleeping where and with whom and how? Yikes, domestic family life must be very interesting in such large families.

I mean, like Dora's kreplach are supreme, but she can't pan-fry liver worth a damn. Brooklyn Clara makes better liver, but don't trust her gefilte fish as far as you can throw Barbara's chocolate brownies or Vivian's roast duck... of Edith's *kasha varnishkah* or her West Bronx Edie's *chaluptchus*.

Of course, with so many wives and daughters, and condoned incest, why would there be adultery?

On the busy Friday super-luncheon, I notice the few Yemeni women who come for lunch are more-or-less run over by the youngsters and other men who push the women aside to get to the buffet or give orders to the specialty chefs. The meals, of course, are world-class, and at under \$25, quite a treat.

Had the Chinese spicy seafood soup, an assortment of Yemeni and Italian vegetable appetizers, stir-fried spicy shrimp and vegetables, Greek and Italian pastries, rich-chocolate ice cream on fresh warm cone, and white tea with mint. Ugh, just lovely. Hyette too.

I skipped as usual stunning display of breads, but was a sucker for the sweets. There were over a dozen varieties of fresh breads, over 20 soft and hard cheeses, well over 50 sweets of every color on display for the buffet, plus six ice-cream choices. The breads got a lot of attention as Hyette was fussing over them, vacuuming up the crumbs, rearranging the bread trays and their contents with a dainty steel utensil, and unavoidable bending, twisting, stretching, and apparent exercising. As it happened, I was in Table One per the yellow cue ball on the table, closest to the breads and Hyette's exhibition. Ah, how sweet it is.

With all her vacuuming up crumbs, I remember exchanging English-as-she-is-spoke phrases earlier with my security manager. He told me that Hoover Vacuum had an advertisement on radio here, in Arabic, which translated, "We suck the best." Gottaya.

Meeting with donor: disaster as donor insists on branding, which will put our people at risk, and at dealing exclusively with the national government, not at the village level, which will unfortunately support corruption and ignore villagers' needs and aspirations.

Say, during *Eid*, our *hoi polloi* hotel is nearly abandoned as livestock are slaughtered in the streets, and everyone is partying with families. I am thinking as the hotel buffets are as abundant as usual, but there are less than ten where there were over 100 guests, does it mean we each must eat ten times our usual size meals? Say, one of my colleagues is having trouble sleeping. I think it's global warming, as because of it, mountain sheep are smaller, so he must count more sheep to go the sleep and all that counting is keeping him up.

Reminds me of Don Marquis' Adventures of Archy and Mehitable (www.donmarquis.com/archy), where Archy tells of his suicide as a human free verse poet and return to earth as a literate cockroach. Well, I'll not spoil it here for you to read why he killed himself, but you guessed it. There was a female involved. But a pal of his committed suicide over sleep. Seems he grew up in an American religious sect which forbids males from shaving. So as a young man, he had a long beard. When his parents died, he joined the circus as an older-looking, bearded wiseman as he had no marketable skills. Circus goers would ask him a question. He would stroke his long beard, look wise and throw out an answer.

One day, the young bearded wiseman was asked if he slept with his long beard outside or inside the bed covers. He never thought about it, so he stayed up nights to see how he slept. Of course, he could not sleep while watching his beard, so he did the only practical thing. He killed himself. Poor bugger.

Oh, my China agricultural tour was cancelled for visa challenges. I am standing by to hear if I can go on to Sudan and more so if the phone interview, I had two weeks ago plus references request this week will lead to a longer-term assignment in Your-up!



Dar (The House of) Fez Restaurant at the Mövenpick Sana'a Hotel – Not Alice's but still pretty good!

Enough of me! *Khalash!* Hope you are having fun, doing good works and keeping out of trouble

I-am-in Ya-man, man! *Eid Al-Adha Al-Mubarak!*
Week Four (of Five) in Five Poorly Drafted, Somewhat Edited Pages – End of
current Saga
Wednesday, 24 November 2010

To a fledging amateur writer, the most frightening thing is not the fear nobody will read your words, but your confrontation with a blank page, or MS Word file. Ugh. Doesn't faze me, as *Juan sin miedo* (fearless John, a Mexican folklore hero). I merely stream-of-consciousness it out. Then three more steps: edit, edit, edit. So here goes Week Four, the end of my current saga!

Spent a few hours at the Bab Al-Yemen (Old Town) gate and *Suk*. Nothing interesting to buy. My senior program manager bought an old wooden box and an old wooden door decoration embedded with carved camel bones. She said she'd run two hours, eight km on the ladies' treadmill; I plopped to the men's treadmill and died after walking 10 minutes when the electricity failed, thanks God.

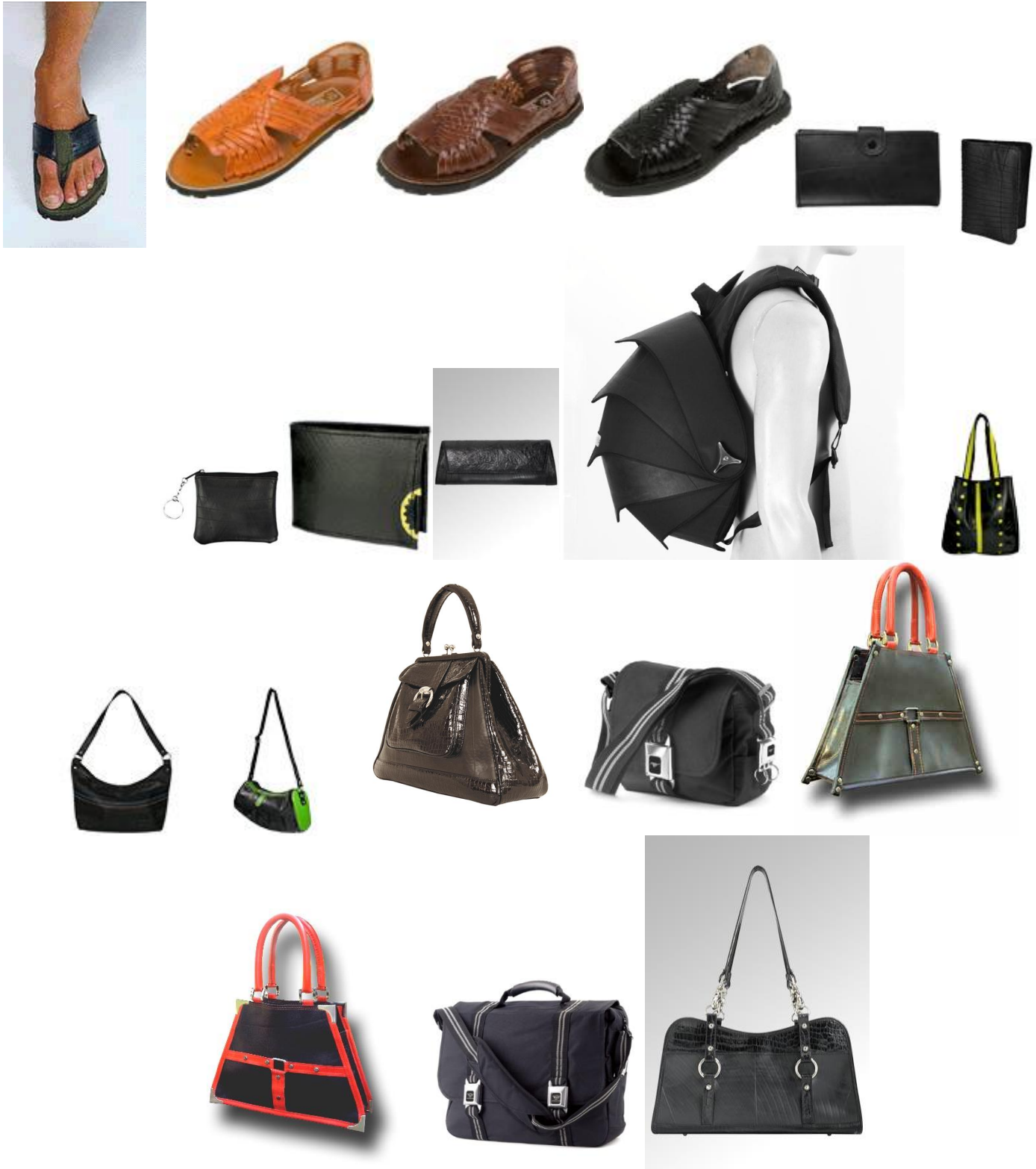


Bab Al-Yemen (Old Town) gate on Shabbat

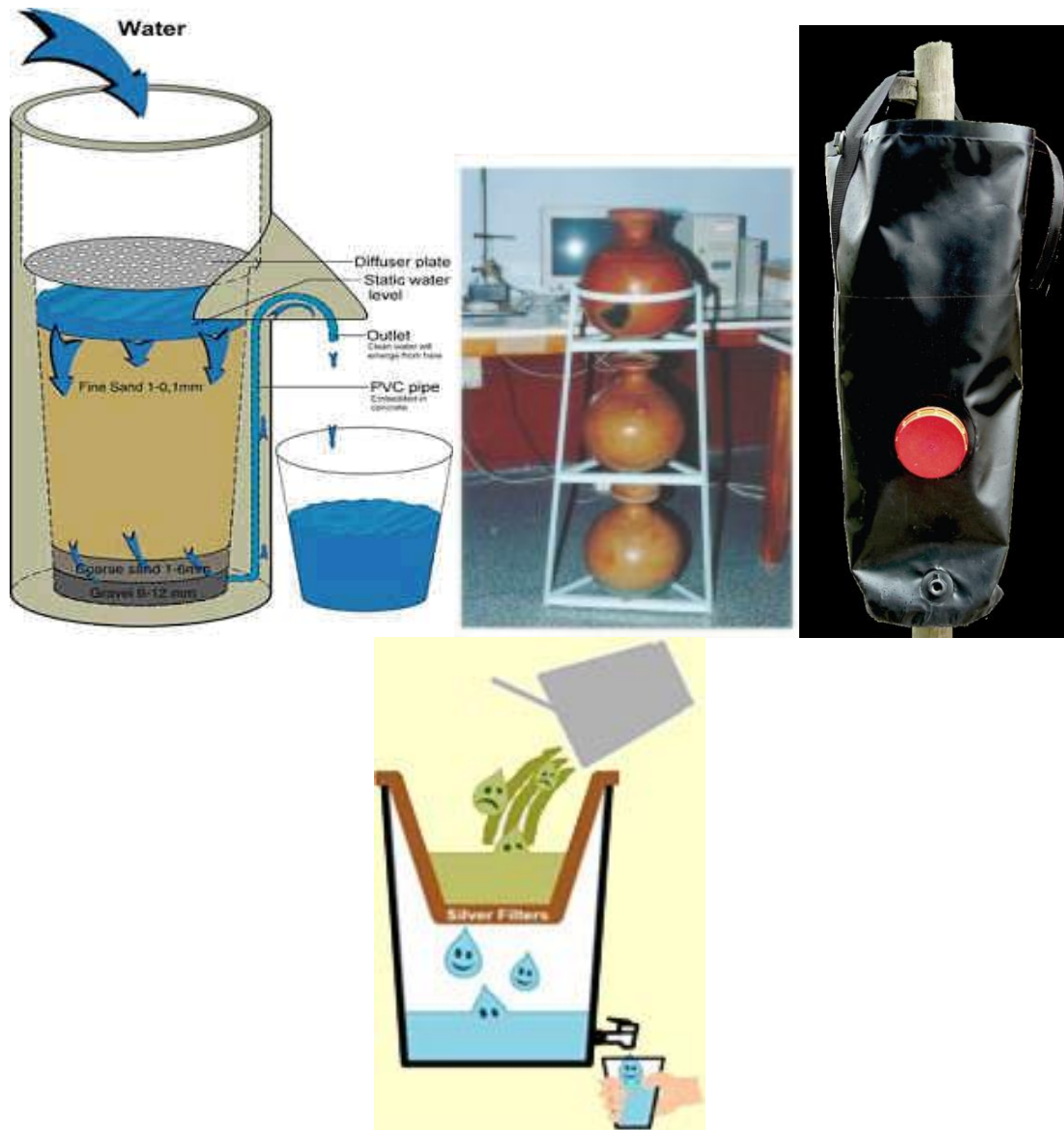
Many ancient doors were for sale at the *Suk* for wall hangings. A *Suk* is a market, not a zoo, but the world passes by and you can buy almost anything if you try. When is a door not a door? When it's ajar, a desk, or a decorative wall hanging. There were lots of old silver pieces from Yemeni Jews, long since persecuted and gone, many in *Eretz*. Jewish jewelers of Yemen are famous, but not for staying

alive in Yemen. Funny, why should someone in the *Suk* who yells “God is great” want to kill me in God’s name? Why would a petroleum-exporting country have such poverty, malnutrition, stunting, and barbaric practices per women and children? Think there is C O R R U P T I O N involved?

Say, if we recycled automobile, truck and bicycle inner tubes and tires like below, wouldya buy one?



Some interesting inexpensive water-treatments:



Sand-gravel, iron filings, ceramic and silver-clay pot filtration

It's the stirring, not the sugar that makes the tea sweet. I have worked in very water-short places like Jordan and Yemen, and water-rich areas like Mindanao/ Philippines and Haiti. The way a culture and society organize itself has more to do with how it manages its water, the stirring if you like, than the amount of water, the sugar. A broken or conflicted society like Yemen and Haiti has little chance or not chance to provide suitable water to its people. Ugh.

Twenty minutes on the Mövenpick Hotel Sana'a men's treadmill at 3.5 MPH, over a km walk, pulse at 130, weight down to 110 (kg), even with my guide Yana from Addis in the Cradle of Mankind holding my water bottle. Gotta do better than this. The South Beach diet went south on me. Jenny, my coach from Legazpi, tells me after China and India, the Philippines has the most expatriates in the world. I can believe it. We talked about typhoons, insurgents, *buca pie*, Goldilocks, Jolly Bee, and the malls of Manila and nurses from the islands. I wanted to tell her this classic, but don't know her well enough:

<Three Pinoy men were introduced to a Filipina lady. The first said, "Hi! I'm Peter, but not the saint." The second said, "I'm Paul, but not the pope." The third said, "I'm John but not the Baptist." The pretty lady said, "Hi to all of you! I'm Mary, but not the virgin.">

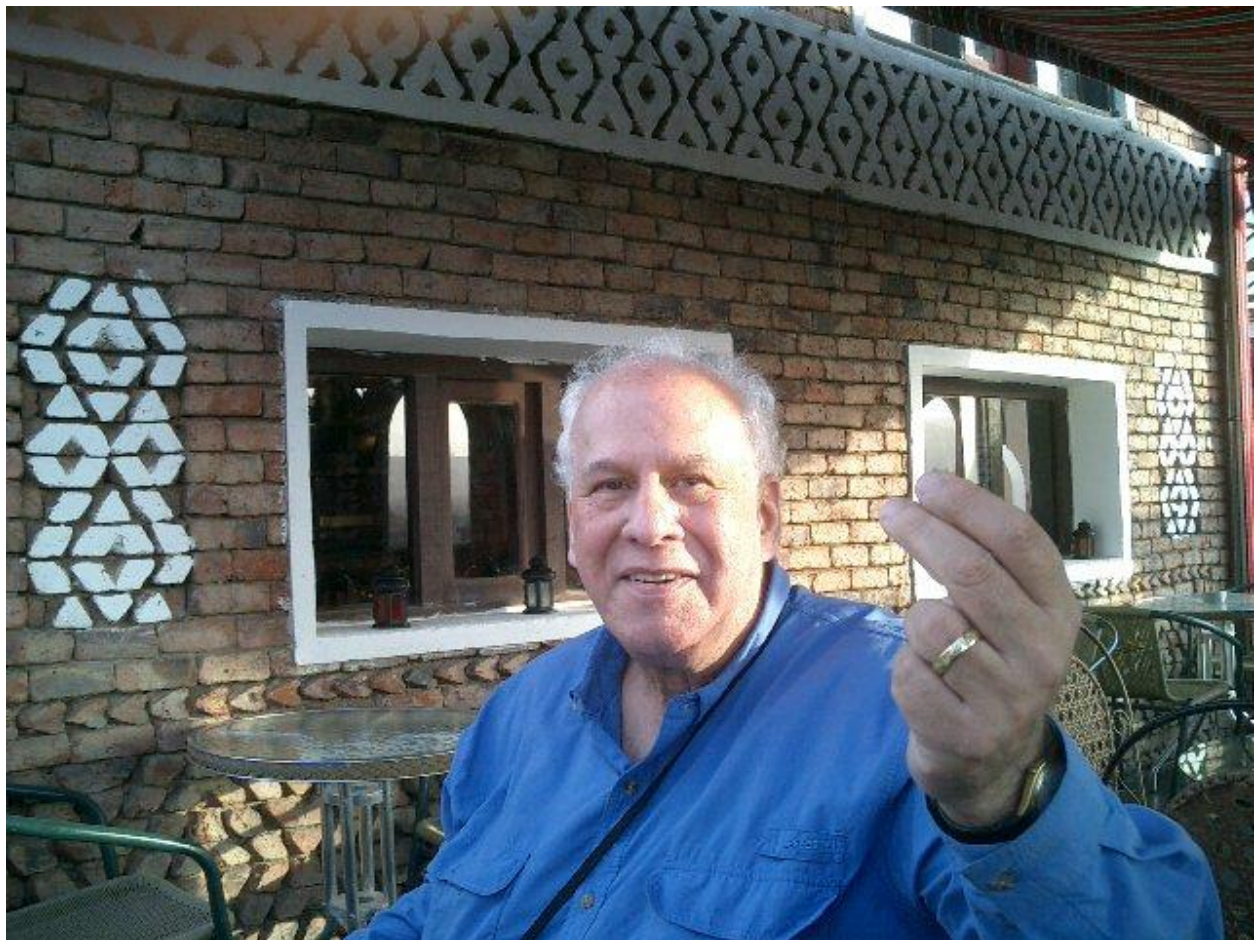


At the very end... you pays your money, you takes your choices

Back in Tucson now; long-suffering wife is rebuilding our new Tucson home. Will cost tens of thousands of dollars and take months. Ugh.

In the Istanbul airport, I am chatting with a Jewish gal from LA returning from Eretz, a Sierra Leone gal from St. Louis returning from Sana'a, and a Turk returning to Cincinnati. We tell jokes. The Turks says, three high-rise construction workers are on a beam eating their lunch, 55 stories over Manhattan. The Italian complains his wife again gave him pasta again. He hates it and vows to jump if he gets pasta again. The Mexican complains his wife gave him tacos again. He hates it and vows to jump if he gets tacos again. The hill-billie complains he has a baloney sandwich again. He hates it and vows to jump if he gets baloney again. Sure enough, next day, the Italian sees he has pasta again, so he jumps to his death. The Mexican sees he has tacos again, so he jumps to his death. And the hill-billie sees he has baloney again, so he jumps to his death. A few days later, the construction union has a grand funeral for the three fellow workers who died on the job. The Italian's wife moans, if she only knew her husband hated pasta, she would have made him another lunch. The Mexican wife moans, if she only knew her husband hated tacos, she would have made him another lunch. The hill-billie's wife is furious. She says he husband always made his own lunch!

Back in Tucson, joined my Mansfield Park Club for group exercise, lunch, computer use, and chatting up my pals there. Nice to be home, nicer to be in adventuring internationally though. Thanksgiving with wife's family tomorrow, then what? Who can tell? *Que sera, sera*. New word for me in Arabic: *Khalash* (enough), *Khalash*.



Moi, sur le haut de toit de l'hôtel Al-Salam.

May be posted on Iranian.com through Jahanshah Javid/Iranian.com/BLOG jj@iranian.com